

Service tomorrow for ex-serviceman and man of many talents

EX-SERVICEMEN. Legatee and Probus members will form a guard of honour tomorrow for the funeral of popular Griffith identity and man of many talents, Dick Stevens.

Richard William Stevens, late of Carrathool Street, Griffith died at the Griffith Base Hospital on Friday at the age of 71 years.

Born in Sydney, Mr Stevens' life took him around the world, spending the longest time in one place when he arrived in the Griffith area about 15 years ago.

When he was 16 years old he put his age up to join the Army and his time with the British Occupational Forces and the National Service took him to Japan, Borneo and Korea.

He was a member of the "Purple Devils", a Commando group reviled by Tokyo Rose during World War II after an engagement in which the 2/6 Independent Commando Squadron suffered a loss of 14 with 24-25 wounded but accounted for 300 Japanese troops during the Buna campaign in Papua New Guinea. After the war he stayed with the Army for some time before retiring as "a cranky old Sergeant Major" and became a deep sea diver with off-shore drilling rigs and with bridge foundations.

He competed in the British Occupational Forces Games in Japan as a member of the Australian breaststroke team, defeating the Americans, and was a member of the Army athletics team and the Army Swimming and Water Polo Team in 1949-51, 1953-54 and 1957-58.

"Dick often said if he had his life to live again, he wouldn't do anything different," his wife, Dawn Beaumont-Stevens said.

"He was a man of many talents and greatly fond of children - even though he was a bit grumpy, he was well loved."

Mr Stevens moved to the Griffith area about 15 years ago, spending much of that time as the swimming pool manager at Whitton. He was a foundation member of Griffith Men's Probus and was actively involved in the YWCA in Sydney and in Brisbane.

For their work in organising the Victory Concert in Griffith last year, Mr Stevens and his wife were recognised by the Griffith City Council at the Australia Day Awards held this year, receiving the 1995 Community Event of the Year Award. The concert, award, organising his wife's 60th birthday party (with military precision) and last but not least, his wedding to Dawn Beaumont on May 22, 1995 made last year the best of his life.

Mr Stevens, at the invitation of local schools, spoke to the children about the Second World War and he also did some work for Griffith pre-



DICK Stevens is pictured with his wife, Dawn, and the Australia Day Award they received from Griffith City Council for the Griffith Remembers Victory Concert.

school, making up their play equipment. He also made and donated a rope board to the local scouts, displaying the many different knots.

His hobbies were engraving and calligraphy, doing all the names for the Australia Day Awards certificates each year for the Griffith Australia Day Committee.

Indeed, Mrs Beaumont-Stevens said he was a little put out when he wasn't asked to do the certificates this year, not realising the reason why was to keep the fact they were among the recipients a secret.

Mr Stevens was a member of the Leeton RSL and Leeton Legacy, greatly involved in music and worked for the Talking Books for the Blind.

During the past few years he has been a Squadron sponsor of the 12 Platoon B Company of the First Recruit Training Battalion at Kapooka. Sergeant Andrew Green said Mr Stevens was one of four or five Commandos who visited the Platoon, talking to recruits, counselling them and generally taking an interest in them.

"They'd be there when we raised the platoon, they'd come down to watch them get their hair cut the first time and say g'day and come back after four weeks and have a beer with the platoon when they had their first beers for four weeks. They'd come down and watch 'the challenge' and they watch the Platoon march out. Before Dick Stevens had his stroke, he came out to see the Platoon. The Platoon marched out two weeks ago and it was the first one he missed."

The 12 Platoon B Company will send a catafalque party and bugler to the funeral tomorrow, joining the honour guard for the late Mr Stevens.

Mr Stevens was the husband of Dawn Beaumont-Stevens, father and father-in-law of Chris and Tina, grandfather of Amy and Ben, stepfather of Narelle Dotta, Sharon and Joe Maugeri and Cassandra Brown and uncle of Clinton, Emma, Sarah, Josh, Nadine, Rochelle, Jocelyn, Laura and Luke.

His funeral will leave the St Alban's Cathedral after a service starting at 2pm tomorrow for interment at the Griffith Lawn Cemetery. Donations may be left at the church for Legacy and flowers will also be gratefully accepted.

All Ex-Servicemen wearing medals, Legatee and Probus members have been respectfully invited to attend to form a guard of honour.

Funeral arrangements are in the care of Tony and Anna Zorzanello of Griffith and District Funerals, Benerembah Street, Griffith.